

Israel and the Clash of Civilizations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East by Jonathan Cook. Pluto Press, 2008, 204 pp., \$24.95.

This is a controversial book. Readers' political perspective regarding Middle East politics and policy shall determine how they accept or reject the assertions of the author. *Israel and the Clash of Civilizations* by Jonathan Cook portrays the United States and Israel as manipulating the political landscape and fostering military actions in the Middle East solely to remake this region for their own national interest. This is a different perspective than the stated national goals of these two nations with regard to the regional stability of the Middle East and the human rights of its inhabitants.

Jonathan Cook is an independent journalist based in Nazareth. He is a former staff journalist for the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers and has also written for *The Times*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Al-Ahram Weekly* and *Aljazeera.net*.

If readers believe the assertions by the author, they will be predisposed to accept many of the tenets offered in this work; however, if they do not accept those basic themes embedded in the work, they shall be predisposed to refute most of the issues developed. My particular view of the book is that it holds some merit for each reader and thus for our Air Force audience. I believe that we should read the views of others that may or may not support our personal perspective on political agendas and by doing so acquire new evidence to either support or deny our beliefs. Thus, through this effort of studying various factions, we strengthen our individual convictions, become stronger in our beliefs, and hopefully become more articulate of our positions. To paraphrase the philosopher Nietzsche's famous comment which comes to my mind while I read this book, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

The essence of the thesis expressed by Cook is that Israel has designs to reshape the region of the Middle East. This reshaping shall adversely impact the surrounding Muslim nations, including Iran and Iraq. Due to the downfall of the Soviet Union, the United States now has the unique opportunity to become further engaged in this region of conflict. Israel is using the United States (military and economic strengths) to further its (Israel's) national agenda and the US goal in this region, publicly stated as "democracy," but as Cook writes, the real objective is US control of oil production, which is also counterproductive to the best interests of these Arab nations.

Through a series of references to previously published opinions and analyses from a myriad of sources, Cook relates how the United States and Israel are working together to the demise of the best interests of Arab countries in the Middle East. It is the opinion of this reader that the interpretation of these references and the ensuing analysis from the author seems to be biased against these two countries. I believe that the value of this work for the majority of readers is gaining an opportunity to view world events through a new lens. Perhaps the facts are reported correctly, then again perhaps not; however, it becomes incumbent upon each reader to decipher the analysis as to whether the "facts" reported allow for the same conclusions to be made. That

experience shall make us more aware not only of other possible interpretations of events from this region but also of other possible perspectives of the US and Israeli political, diplomatic, and military actions and intentions. This work could be worthy of debate at the various war colleges, where a full dialogue could ensue as to the various premises offered by Cook and the thoroughness of his analysis and conclusions.

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